

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 TEL AVIV 3194

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IS
SUBJ: THE 29TH WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS IN RETROSPECT

REF: TEL AVIV 2496

SUMMARY: THE 29TH WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS PASSED AS A
RATHER UNDRAMATIC EVENT. WHILE PRIME MINISTER BEGIN
WAS PERSONALLY INVOLVED IN CONFLICTS OVER MEMBERSHIP AND
PORTFOLIO ASSIGNMENTS TO THE 28 MEMBER EXECUTIVE, AND WHILE
HE SPENT A GREAT DEAL OF TIME MEETING WITH FOREIGN DELEGATES,
HE SHOWED LITTLE INTEREST IN THE CONGRESS AS SUCH. HIS ADDRESS
TO THE CLOSING SESSION TOOK PLACE MARCH 1 AT FOUR A.M. AND
WAS GIVEN LITTLE COVERAGE BY PRESS AND RADIO. THE MAIN ISSUE
AT THE CONGRESS WAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE JEWISH COM-
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MUNITIES IN THE DIASPORA AND ISRAEL. HERE THE FOREIGN DEL-
EGATES RECEIVED VERY LITTLE SATISFACTION AND THEIR CRITICISMS
OF ISRAEL'S SETTLEMENT POLICIES AND CONDUCT OF NEGOTIATIONS
WITH EGYPT WERE RECEIVED WITH CONSIDERABLE IRRITATION. THE
POSITION OF THE ISRAELI DELEGATES WAS THAT THE SURVIVAL OF WORLD
JEWRY DEPENDS ON THE SURVIVAL OF ISRAEL, THEREFORE ITS PROBLEMS
MUST HAVE ABSOLUTE PRIORITY, AND ANY PROBLEMS WHICH ISRAEL'S

FOREIGN OR DEFENSE POLNBWPNBLMAY CAUSE OTHER JEWISH COMMUNITIES MUST THUS BE ACCEPTED. NOTWITHSTANDING THIS RATHER UNSATISFACTORY DIALOGUE, THE AMERICAN JEWISH LEADERS WITH THE HELP OF THE LABOR PARTY WERE ABLE TO SCORE A LIMITED SUCCESS IN OBTAINING MAJORITY SUPPORT FOR TWO RESOLUTIONS CALLING FOR EQUAL STATUS FOR REFORM AND CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM WITH THAT OF THE ORTHODOX ESTABLISHMENT BOTH IN ISRAEL AND IN ZIONIST INSTITUTIONS ABROAD. THIS EMBARRASSED THE GOVERNMENT, LED TO A TEMPORARY ORTHODOX WALKOUT AND PROTEST DEMONSTRATION, AND OFFERED ESPECIALLY AMERICANS THE SATISFACTION THAT AN OPENING--ALBEIT A SMALL ONE--HAD BEEN CREATED FOR AN OUTSIDE FORCE POTENTIALLY TO INFLUENCE INSTITUTIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS INSIDE ISRAEL. BEGIN'S ANNOUNCEMENT DURING THE CONGRESS THAT UNSC RESOLUTION 242 DID NOT APPLY TO JUDEA AND SAMARIA CAUSED CONSIDERABLE CONSTERNATION AMONG MANY FOREIGN DELEGATES, ESPECIALLY AMERICANS. THE UNRESOLVED CONFLICT OVER THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE JEWISH AGENCY AND THE MINISTRY OF IMMIGRATION-ABSORPTION CONTINUED TO BE ANOTHER SMOLDERING SOURCE OF FRICTION BETWEEN THE ISRAELIS AND THE AMERICANS. END SUMMARY

1. THE 29TH WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS ENDED IN THE EARLY HOURS OF MARCH 1 IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF GENERAL DISAPPOINTMENT THAT BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS HAD ESSENTIALLY FAILED TO TURN IT INTO THE EXPECTED DRAMATIC DEMONSTRATION OF WORLD JEWISH SOLIDARITY (REFTEL). INSTEAD, BOTH THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC SAW IT AS LITTLE MORE THAN "POLITICS AS USUAL" AND CONFIDENTIAL

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A DEVICE TO PROMOTE JEWISH TOURISM. THE CONGRESS CANNOT BE CONSIDERED A PARLIAMENT OF WORLD JEWRY; IT REPRESENTS A CONGLOMERATE OF DISPARATE JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS WHICH CAN DO LITTLE MORE THAN PASS WATERED-DOWN AND GOVERNMENT-GUIDED RESOLUTIONS. THIS ONE TURNED INTO A RATHER PEDESTRIAN TOWN HALL MEETING.

2. PRIME MINISTER BEGIN, WHO ADDRESSED THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE CONGRESS, DELAYED THE DELIVERY OF HIS SPEECH FOR SEVEN HOURS BECAUSE DICKERING OVER THE ELECTION OF THE WZO EXECUTIVE AND THE ASSIGNMENT OF PORTFOLIOS REQUIRED HIS PERSONAL INTERVENTION IN THE END, HE DELIVERED A SHORT SPEECH AT 4 A.M. TO A HALF EMPTY CONGRESS AND HIS WORDS WERE BARELY REPORTED IN THE PRESS. HIS MESSAGE CALLED FOR THE RESUMPTION OF DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS AND UNDERSTANDING THAT ISRAEL MUST BE ABLE TO SAY NO TO THE WORLD WHERE ITS SURVIVAL IS CONCERNED (SEE TEL AVIV 3122).

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3. ACCORDING TO CONGRESS DELEGATES, BEGIN WAS AT THAT POINT FATIGUED AND IRRITATED OVER HAVING BEEN QUESTIONED AND CRITICIZED BY VARIOUS FOREIGN DELEGATES ON HIS HANDLING OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND SETTLEMENTS ISSUES. HE WAS ALSO RESENTFUL OVER HAVING HAD TO ARGUE AND FIGHT, PARTICULARLY WITH AMERICAN JEWISH LEADERS, IN ORDER TO ENSURE A DOMINANT ROLE FOR LIKUD, INCLUDING APPROPRIATE PORTFOLIOS FOR HERUT, IN KEY WZO-JEWISH AGENCY POSITIONS. HE ALSO HAD TO AVOID THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN THE JEWISH AGENCY AND THE MINISTRY OF ABSORPTION FROM THREATENING HIS COALITION (SEE TEL AVIV 1370-NOTAL). HOWEVER, ONCE LIKUD'S DOMINANT ROLE WAS ASSURED, HE LOST INTEREST IN THE CONGRESS.

4. THE NEW LIKUD DOMINANCE CLEARLY MANIFESTED ITSELF IN THE UNANIMOUS ELECTION OF FORMER JEWISH AGENCY TREASURER ARYE DULZIN (LIBERAL-LIKUD) AS WZO CHAIRMAN. LIKUD'S MUSCLE FLEXING IN
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CLAIMING JOBS, PATRONAGE AND THE RIGHT TO GUIDE THE WORLD ZIONIST MOVEMENT WAS THE MOST EVIDENT POLITICAL GAME. LABOR WAS ABLE TO ASSERT ITSELF A FEW TIMES BY ALIGNING ON CERTAIN ISSUES WITH FOREIGN DELEGATES, ESPECIALLY THE AMERICAN REFORM SYNAGOGUE MOVEMENT (ARTZA) AND THE CONFEDERATION OF UNITED ZIONISTS (HADDASAH), BY USING THE CONGRESS AS A PLATFORM TO

CHALLENGE THE GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLICIES, AND BY STRESSING THE NEED FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES ABROAD. HOWEVER, WITH NEITHER PERES NOR ALLON AS SERIOUS CONTENDERS FOR LEADING A NEW MAJORITY, LABOR'S ROLE WAS GENERALLY A MINOR ONE.

5. AMONG THE UNEXPECTED EPISODES OF THE CONGRESS WAS THE SURPRISING VICTORY OF ARTZA IN GAINING MAJORITY SUPPORT FOR TWO RESOLUTIONS ON RELIGIOUS PLURALISM; ONE DEALING WITH ZIONIST EDUCATION AND THE OTHER "ACCORDING EQUAL STATUS AND VALUE TO ALL RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS" IN ISRAEL. THIS WAS A BLOW TO THE ORTHODOX ESTABLISHMENT WHICH INSISTS ON ITS ROLE AS THE SOLE AUTHENTIC GUARDIAN OF THE JEWISH FAITH, A ROLE ENCOURAGED AND SUPPORTED BY THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT TO THE IRRITATION OF IMPORTANT SEGMENTS OF JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADERS IN THE U.S. AND WESTERN EUROPE WHERE A MAJORITY ARE NON-ORTHODOX. THE ORTHODOX MOVEMENT (MIZRACHI), SUPPORTED BY HERUT, PROTESTED THIS VOTE WITH NOISY DEMONSTRATIONS AND CHALLENGED THE RIGHT OF THE CONGRESS TO BIND ISRAEL AND THE WZO TO THE RESOLUTIONS. MIZRACHI EVEN THREATENED TO LEAVE THE CONGRESS, BUT, REALIZING THAT THE VOTES WOULD HAVE LITTLE IMMEDIATE RELEVANCE TO THE PROSPECTS FOR RELIGIOUS REFORM IN ISRAEL AND RECEIVING ASSURANCES FROM BEGIN TO THAT EFFECT, RETURNED TO THE FLOOR. THE LIKUD LEADERSHIP AT THE CONGRESS AND THE GOVERNMENT WERE CLEARLY EMBARRASSED BY THIS VOTE, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE MANY MEMBERS OF LIKUD'S OWN LIBERAL WING HAD BROKEN RANKS AND VOTED FOR THE RESOLUTIONS. THE ISSUE IS NOW BEING REVIEWED BY THE WZO APPEALS COURT.

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6. ALTHOUGH THE IMMEDIATE PROSPECTS FOR THE REFORM AND CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENTS TO GAIN RELIGIOUS LEGITIMACY IN ISRAEL ARE SLIM, THE LEADERS OF THESE MOVEMENTS, NOW THAT THEY HAVE BEEN FULLY ACCEPTED AS PART OF THE WORLD ZIONIST MOVEMENT, WILL USE THE RESOLUTIONS AND THE VOTES TO CHALLENGE THE MONOPOLY OF THE ORTHODOX ESTABLISHMENT.

THIS REFLECTS AN IMPORTANT NEW EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY, IN COOPERATION WITH THE LABOR ALIGNMENT, TO INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENTS OF RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN ISRAEL. THIS COMES, HOWEVER, AT A TIME WHEN THE PREDOMINANT SENTIMENT EXPRESSED BY THE CONGRESS POINTS IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION, I.E., THAT ZIONISM SHOULD BE ISRAEL-CENTERED,

THAT THE RELATION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE DIASPORA COMMUNITIES IS NOT AN EQUAL PARTNERSHIP, AND THAT ISRAEL SHOULD INFLUENCE THE DIASPORA, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND. SOME AMERICAN SOURCES EVEN SPECULATED THAT THIS ISSUE OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM MAY YET PRECIPITATE MOUNTING CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY AND BEGIN AND EVEN LEAD TO EFFORTS OF ENCOURAG-

ING THE OPPOSITION AGAINST THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT.

7. ESSENTIALLY, THE SAME ALLIANCE OF LABOR-MAPAM-ARTZA DELEGATES, INCLUDING A HEAVY AMERICAN CONTINGENT, ALSO MANAGED TO GET A SMALL MAJORITY FOR A MAPAM-SPONSORED RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE WZO AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL TO SUSPEND SETTLEMENT ACTIVITIES IN THE OCCUPIED AREAS SINCE "THE CONTINUATION OF THE NEW SETTLEMENTS IN THESE AREAS CONTRADICTS THE PEACE PROCESS AND JEOPARDIZES ITS SUCCESS." THIS WAS NARROWLY DEFEATED ON A RECOUNT, BUT SHOWED HOW CLOSELY DIVIDED THE DELEGATES WERE ON SUCH A BASIC FOREIGN POLICY ISSUE.

8. UNDERLYING THE RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY AND THE SETTLEMENTS ISSUE, HOWEVER, WAS THE MORE BASIC QUESTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN THE DIASPORA TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL.
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HERE THE SPEECHES, ARGUMENTS, AND DRAFT RESOLUTIONS ON ZIONISM AND ZIONIST IDEOLOGY MADE IT CLEAR THAT, NOTWITHSTANDING ALL THE DECLARATIONS OF SOLIDARITY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS THAT THE STATE OF ISRAEL AND ZIONISM PROVIDE THE PIVOTAL RALLYING POINT FOR JEWISH COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, DIFFERENCES OVER THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE DIASPORA REMAINED UNRESOLVED. THE ISRAELI MAJORITY, UNDER THE LIKUD AND RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP, WERE DETERMINED TO MAKE THE FOREIGN DELEGATES ACCEPT THEIR PRIORITIES AND THEIR FORMULATION OF ZIONIST

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IDEOLOGY. THEY REJECTED THE NOTION OF AN EQUAL PARTNERSHIP WHICH THE AMERICANS IN PARTICULAR TRIED HARD TO GET ACCEPTED IN THE END, IT WAS DECIDED TO LEAVE THIS ISSUE IN COMMITTEE FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION. HOWEVER, THE RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED CAREFULLY DODGED THE NOTION OF PARTNERSHIP. THE INEQUALITY OF THE RELATION WAS ALSO REFLECTED IN FOREIGN MINISTER DAYAN'S SHARP ATTACK ON FOREIGN DELEGATES WHO QUESTIONED AND CRITICIZED ISRAEL'S SETTLEMENTS POLICY AND NEGOTIATING TACTICS. NOR WAS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BEGIN'S TIMING IN ANNOUNCING THAT SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 242 DID NOT PLPLY TO "JUDEA AND SAMARIA" DURING THE CONGRESS

LOST ON THE AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN JEWISH LEADERSHIP, WHO QUICKLY MADE THEIR ANXIETY KNOWN TO BEGIN.

9. KEY AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN DELEGATES, INCLUDING PHILIP
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KLUTZNICK, MELVIN DUBINSKY, DAVID BLUMBERG (BNAI BRITH), AND RABBI SCHINDLER ON THE U.S. SIDE, LORD FISHER (UK), AND BARON ALAIN DE ROTHSCHILD (FRANCE) ALL PLEADED FOR THE PARTNERSHIP CONCEPT. THEY INSISTED THAT IN RETURN FOR THE COMMITMENTS OF THEIR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES TO ISRAEL, WHICH THEY ARE LOYALLY READY TO GIVE, THEY HAVE A RIGHT TO BE CONSULTED ON THE WAY THE GOI CONDUCTS ITS FOREIGN POLICY, AND CERTAINLY IN AREAS AFFECTING KEY FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS OF THEIR OWN COUNTRIES. THE AMERICAN PARTICULARLY STRESSED HOW MUCH THEY HAD CONTRIBUTED TO ISRAEL'S DIPLOMACY, INTERNATIONAL STATUS, AND SECURITY. THEY FELT THAT ISRAEL DEPENDS TO A CONSIDERABLE EXTENT ON THESE RESOURCES AND EFFORTS, WHICH, IN TURN, ALSO INVOLVE THE STATUS AND POLITICAL EFFECTIVENESS OF THEIR OWN LEADERSHIP. THESE VITAL INTERESTS OF THE AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN JEWISH COMMUNITIES CANNOT BE IGNORED OR MINIMIZED BY THE ISRAELI LEADERSHIP.

10. RESPONDING TO ISRAELI ARGUMENTS THAT THE SURVIVAL OF THE DIASPORA COMMUNITIES IS THREATENED, (BY INTERMARRIAGE, LOSS OF FAITH, ETC), TGQERE WERE ADMISSIONS THAT ARAB RESOIRCES AND LEVERAGE AS WELL AS PERIODIC MANIFESTATIONS OF ANTI-SEMITISM WERE BOTHERSOME, BUT THE COMMUNITIES DID NOT SEE THE THREAT TO

THEIR SURVIVAL. THEY REAFFIRMED THEIR VITAL STAKE IN ISRAEL'S STRENGTH AND ROLE AS A HAVEN FOR PERSECUTED COMMUNITIES AND DECLARED THAT THEY WOULD NOT BREAK WITH ITS LEADERSHIP NO MATTER WHAT THE DISAGREEMENTS, BUT THE MESSAGE WAS CLEAR THAT THE DEGREE OF THEIR SUPPORTIVE EFFORTS WOULD DEPEND ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH ISRAEL PERMITS THEM A ROLE OF PARTNERSHIP. THEIR FRUSTRATIONS OVER BEING LECTURED TO BUT NOT LISTENED TO BY BEGIN, DAYAN AND OTHERS WAS QUITE MANIFEST, ALTHOUGH MORE EXPLICIT IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS THAN IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

11. THE CONGRESS ENDED RATHER ANTI-CLIMATICALLY WITH THE ELECT-
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ION OF THE 28 MEMBER WZO-JA EXECUTIVE (14 FOR ISRAEL, 14 FOR THE DIASPORA) WITH THE FOLLOWING
DISTRIBUTION: LIKUD-6; HADASSAH-4;
LABOR-4; MIZRACHI-3; DMC-1; MAPAM-1; WIZO-1; WORLD MACCABI UNION-1; WORLD SEPHARDIC FEDERATION-2; WORLD COUNCIL OF SYNA-
GOGUES (CONSERVATIVES)-2; WORLD UNION OF PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM (REFOR)-2; WORLD UNION OF SYNAGOGUES AND CONGREGATIONS (ORT-HODOX)-2. EACH GROUP DESIGNATED THE INDIVIDUALS FOR ITS SEATS. SINCE THE DESIGNATION OF THE PORTFOLIOS WOULD HAVE DRAGGED ON, THE CONGRESS AGREED UNDER LIKUD PRESSURE BUT AGAINST STRONG LABOR OPPOSITION TO POSTPONE THE PORTFOLIO APPOINTMENTS. THESE WILL BE MADE FOLLOWING THE MEETING OF THE JEWISH AGENCY BOARD OF GOVERNORS IN APRIL, WHEN THE FOUR KEY JA POSITIONS OF TREASURER, ALIYA DEPARTMENT, SETTLEMENTS, AND YOUTH ALIYA WILL BE FILLED. HERE THE KEY BATTLE WILL BE WHETHER HERUT WILL GET ONE OR TWO POSITIONS, AND PARTICULARLY WHETHER IT WILL GET THE TREASURY, WHICH LABOR DEMANDS FOR ITSELF. BEGIN LEANED HARD ON KEY AMERICAN JEWISH LEADERS TO GET TWO HERUT PORTFOLIOS. WHILE THE AMERICANS WILL PROBABLY CONCEDE THE TREASURY TO HERUT, THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY UNHAPPY. HERE AGAIN THE AMERICANS FEEL THAT IN A AREA OF VITAL INTEREST TO THEM, SUCH AS THE MANAGEMENT OF THE JEWISH AGENCY, THEY ARE ASKED TO YIELD TO SUPERIOR ISRAELI POLITICAL INTERESTS, THIS TIME IN ORDER TO HELP BEGIN WITH HIS PERSONAL LEADERSHIP AND COALITION PROBLEMS, WHEN NO OVERRIDING CLAIM OF ISRAEL'S VITAL SECURITY INTERESTS CAN BE MADE.
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